

An Airport at Miramar May Not Fly

By Council President Scott Peters, First District

Since its inception in 2003, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority has been charged with making one of the region's most challenging and controversial decisions in recent memory-where to place a new international airport.

For more than 50 years, civic and business leaders have told us that Lindbergh Field will soon become inadequate, and that we must build a larger, two-runway airport if we are to remain a vibrant and competitive city. The question has always been and remains to this day, where to put it.

Given its easy access and beautiful surroundings, Lindbergh Field seems like the ideal place for an international gateway to San Diego. For years we have searched with little success for a way to expand our existing airport. A variety of other proposals have come in and out of vogue over the years, such as a shared bi-national airport, an airport in Imperial County accessible by high-speed rail, even a floating airport off the San Diego coast. None of these proposals has proven feasible.

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, formerly Naval Air Station Miramar, has long tempted those searching for an airport site within the city limits. You can understand why it seems so appealing, a large open space with easy freeway access within 30 minutes of anyone in the county. Unfortunately, San Diego forfeited its opportunity to acquire that land in the 1940's, when civic leaders decided it was "too far away" from the heart of the city for an airport.

Over the past several years, the Airport Authority board has considered a number of sites for a new airport, including an expansion at Lindberg Field, a desert site and several military sites including Miramar. I appreciate their work to make the deliberative process open and transparent. However, both the Navy and Marine Corps made it abundantly clear throughout the process that they were adamantly opposed to a joint-use airport at Miramar. Leaders from the Pentagon and San Diego's congressional delegation repeatedly asked the board not to consider a military site. I am disappointed that the board ignored this advice, and has placed a proposal for a joint-use airport at Miramar on the ballot this Fall.

No matter how many times we ask, the military is not going to change its mind. It's almost as though we've made up our minds about who we are going to marry, and although she's turned us down dozens of times, we're sending out the wedding invitations with her name on them. It just doesn't make sense.

In addition to the military's opposition, there are significant community impacts to consider. A commercial airport at Miramar would radically alter military flight operations, diverting jet traffic directly over La Jolla, University City and several other communities. The noise from these round-the-clock flights would be unacceptable in our residential neighborhoods.

I will remain vigilant in my efforts to protect the citizens of Council District One. I urge all residents to make sure their voter registration is up to date, attend the several community forums scheduled for this summer and fall, and VOTE on November 7. The future of our region is in your hands.